(b) Out of the four PCMs available between Phutsholling and Siliguri three are occupied by TAX Circuits and one PCM is available for Non-Tax Circuits with first order MUX available at Calcutta and Phutsholling. Out of 30 channels available in this PCM five are occupied at present and twenty five circuits are free which can be utilized for leased lines.

3. Bangladesh

(a) The medium between India and Bangladesh is Analong M/W. There is a proposal for an optical fibre link from Calcutta to Jessore and a Microwave link from Agartala to Brahmanbaria.

(b) Between India and Bangladesh no spare slot is available as only one Supergroup is working present which is occupied by TAX Circuits.

Outgoing Telex traffic from Calcutta to Thimpu (Bhutan) and from Calcutta to Dhaka (Bangladesh) have been re-routed via VSNL GATEX Switch.

Expansion and Upgradation of Telecommunication system in North-East Region

2631. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) The funds allocated for development, expansion and upgradation of telecommunications system in rural and urban areas in the NER particularly in the the State of Assam during the last three years;

(b) whether it is a fact that the implementation with regard to development and upgradation of telecommunications in rural and urban areas is very slow in NER in comparison to other-States of the Country; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The fiinds allocated to North East Region including Task Force Guwahati are given below :

AREA

(Amount in crores of Rs.)

Year	Urban	Rural	Tribal
1997-98	176,05	24.45	82.14
1998-99	168.06	30.30	138.61
1999-2000	140.30	53.62	199.41

Assam

AREA

Year	Urban	Rural	Tribal
1997-98	95.12	21.92	5.44
1998-99	90.95	13.87	8.03
1999-2000	90.38	32.37	20.80

(b) and (c) The growth rate of Direct Exchange lines during 1999-2000 for the North East Circle is 20.89% and for Assam Telecom circle is 28.86% whereas All India growth rate for the said period is 22.77%. Other details are given as under :—

Assam

	Achievements	
	1998-99	1999-2000
So. of Telephone Exchanges	47	49
Sew Telephone Connections	50375	61162
Set Switching Capacity	70370	81810

NORTH EAST

	Achievements	
	1998-99	1999-2000
No. of Telephone Exchanges	37	32
New Telephone Connections	35116	43801
Net Switching Capacity	59260	79012